Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia, edited by Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1991. ISBN 0–521–39018–4, xvii + 328 pp, figures, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US$47.50.

This important volume resulted from a workshop expressly convened by the editors to consider the typological distinction between big men and great men developed in Godelier's *The Making of Great Men.* Godelier's invention of the great man both upset the easy convention of identifying Melanesian politics with big-manship and reinvigorated the comparative analysis that first gave rise to this convention. He extended Sahlins' influential argument that differences in the power personified by big men and chiefs indicate differences between entire sociopolitical systems. The construct of great man is above all a welcome addition to the vocabulary of comparison in Pacific studies.

In Godelier's view, big-manship presupposes a particular conjunction of kinship and economy, such that things and persons substitute for each other in a range of transactions that especially includes bridewealth. That is, the qualitative "non-equivalence" of transacted objects practically links the production and exchange of food, pigs, and shells (things) to the exchange of women and the reproduction of kin (persons). A principle of quantitative "non-equivalence," moreover, underpins the competitive ceremonial exchanges in which big men create their status. By contrast, great men do not acquire their status through the managed circulation of accumulated wealth. They emerge instead where public life turns on ritual initiations, where marriage involves the direct ("equivalent") exchange of women, and where warfare similarly prescribes the balanced exchange of homicides. Accordingly, the typological distinction between big men and great men abbreviates a difference between logics of social reproduction, and it is these alternative logics rather than the figures of prominent men themselves that properly merit comparative treatment.

Happily, few contributors test Godelier's typology in a dull exercise of falsification—an exercise that would in any case be restricted by the preponderance of Papua New Guinea ethnography. The volume neither validates nor refutes Godelier's comparison. Instead, most of the fourteen papers bend and stretch his typology; some virtually dissolve it. Put differently, the papers explore the limits and exploit the potential of the big man–great man contrast, but not in order to propose an alternative. Godelier devotes the last chapter to speculation about the evolution of great-men societies into big-men societies. This concluding attempt at reconstructing causal relations counterpoises the gentle deconstruction of his typology that the rest of the book accomplishes.

A process of unmaking the great-man construct organizes the book. The first three papers establish the coexistence of big-man societies and great-man societies within particular regions —Highlands New Guinea, the Massim, and north Vanuatu. Each author

advances some idea of a continuum or matrix of transformations that defines big men, great men, and chiefs as logical possibilities of each other. This analytic strategy softens Godelier's radical contrast. It also opens the question, engaged by subsequent papers, of whether the types or societies are historical transformations of each other. Lemmonier, in line with Godelier, specifies the evolution of war into competitive exchange as a key factor in the emergence of big-man societies; Liep and Jolly suggest that big-man societies and great-man societies might have devolved from earlier chiefly societies.

The next set of papers locates the distinction between great men and big men within particular societies rather than between them. Battaglia and Tuzin, for example, map the distinction on the basis of dichotomies of female-male and elder brother–younger brother, respectively. Juillerat and Schwimmer argue as well that big men and great men should be seen as expressions of contradictory possibilities within a single encompassing logic of social reproduction. Consequently the comparative question becomes one of determining which possibility dominates or eclipses the other, that is, of determining the ratio between the two possibilities. This question, in turn, allows one to ask whether certain historical circumstances favor the development of big-men societies. Several of the papers in this regard suggest (but unfortunately do not pursue) the idea that the social practices associated with big-manship developed in articulation with the effects and conditions of capitalism and colonialism.

Wagner introduces the third set of papers by posing a methodological question shared by several contributors: Is typology or classification a method of comparison appropriate to Melanesian societies? Echoing Mosko's interpretation of north Mekeo culture and society as a "total system," Wagner argues that typologies inevitably and arbitrarily decompose irreducible wholes, indigenous sequences of thought and action that replicate and permutate a specifiable core of meanings or relations. Gillison traces a complex sequence of such transformations while turning Godelier's "principle of non-equivalence" into a postulate about metaphorical substitutions between persons and things in Gimi myth and ritual. Strathern then extends Gillison's understanding of substitution (and recovers it for the announced project of the volume) by treating big men and great men as "substitutes" for (or visible embodiments of) distinct modes of social relationship. Since these two modes of relationship—unitary identity and particularized difference—appear in social action as alternatives to each other, it is not surprising that the typological distinction between big men and great men continually threatens to collapse.

At this point in the volume, Godelier's materialist and evolutionary concerns appear to be subsumed within the conduct of a different sort of social analysis. However, the final three papers, all based on Highlands New Guinea ethnography, gradually reintroduce Godelier's initial dichotomy and the themes taken up in his conclusion. Lederman, while advancing the provocative methodological critique of comparison-by-typology, shows how

the structure of exchanges in Mendi curtails the scale of collective transactions and hence the "size" of big men. Modjeska returns to development questions, using the Duna to exemplify how the expansion of sweet potato or pig production enabled the (pre)historical displacement of ritual-mythical practices by gift-economic ones. Jorgensen correlates the distinction between big man and great man with differences in the evaluation of men's and women's (re)productive capacities —a consideration given less emphasis in the volume than one might expect.

Perhaps because of its unusual genesis, the volume is unusually coherent. Each paper separately enriches the newer literature inspired by the figure of the Melanesian big man (see for example the papers in volume 29 of the journal *Ethnology*), but together they render further discussion of big-manship as a style of leadership, or even as a form of politics, unacceptably simple. This outcome is the positive legacy of Godelier's effort at comparing "alternative logics of society." The positive value of this volume for a non-Melanesianist audience likewise consists in its double demonstration of the familiar limitations and untried possibilities of comparative analysis.

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Stealing People's Names: History and Politics in a Sepik River Cosmology, by Simon J. Harrison. Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 71. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. ISBN 0–521–38504–0, xvi + 221 pp, plates, maps, figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index. US$47.50.

Harrison's much-anticipated monograph, *Stealing People's Names,* is the finest anthropological picture of a Sepik society since the work of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. The book focuses on Avatip, the largest of three Manambu villages, located along the upper reaches of the middle Sepik River. Until now, there has been little anthropological information about this unique Sepik culture. Based on twenty-two months' research from 1977 to 1979, *Stealing People's Names* investigates the political order of the society as it inheres in the symbolic realm of culture.

Harrison arrived in Avatip prepared to investigate the male-dominated prestige exchanges of material wealth that constitute a dominant mode of political process in Melanesia. But he was soon presented with a problem, for Avatip lacks these exchanges. Moreover, the village seemed remarkably preoccupied with the ownership and disputation of totemic names. Indeed, political process in Avatip, culminating with dramatic oratorial debates, revolves around these names rather than such material wealth as shell valuables, pigs, and land. In other words, the political economy and history of Avatip were being played out in an arena of symbolism and cosmology rather than one of wealth objects. Harrison's goals were to describe and explain these processes.

Manambu cosmology is a fixed system of timeless categories that organize the world and human society. This cosmology, enshrined in totemic names